

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

IO-13 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 AID-05 /088 W

----- 033831

R 061257Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7581

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 11564

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: POLITICAL RUMORS, POLITICAL APATHY, POLITICAL STABILITY

REF: (A) NEW DELHI 9553, (B) NEW DELHI 7459, (C) NEW DELHI 10526,  
(D) NEW DELHI 11071

SUMMARY: NEW ARRESTS IN GUJARAT, BIHAR, AND THE PUNJAB; AN INCREASE IN LABOR UNREST AND TENSION; GROWING UNEASE AND DISILLUSIONMENT AMONG BUSINESSMEN ABOUT THE EMERGENCY; A SPATE OF RUMORS ABOUT DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN MRS. GANDHI AND PRESIDENT AHMED; POSTPONEMENT OF THE RUMORED CABINET RESHUFFLE AND PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALIZATION OF A LEADING CABINET MEMBER; AND REPORTS OF A PLANNED FAST-TO-DEATH BY ONE OF INDIA'S MOST RESPECTED "SAINTS", VINOBE BHAVE: ALL THESE HAVE STIRRED MUCH PRIVATE DISCUSSION AND WHISPERING WITHIN DELHI POLITICAL CIRCLES IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS. BUT THE GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF MOST POLITICAL OBSERVERS, SHARED BY THE EMBASSY AND THE THREE CONGENS, IS THAT THE OVERALL STABILITY AND SECURITY OF THE PM'S POSITION REMAIN UNSHAKEN. THE BLOOM  
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IS INCREASINGLY OFF THE EMERGENCY ROSE, HOWEVER, AND THE

CYNICISM AND APATHY WE HAVE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY AS GROWING CONTINUES TO BE SEEN MORE WIDELY AND AMONG MORE DIVERSE GROUPS. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF GENERAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY CONTAINED IN REFS A AND B HAS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED IN LAST TWO MONTHS. NEVERTHELESS, THE POLITICAL WIRES ARE HUMMING UNUSUALLY LOUDLY IN DELHI AND THERE IS A GENERAL FEELING OF SOME RESTLESSNESS AMONG MANY OF OUR POLITICAL CONTACTS.

2. THERE HAS BEEN AN UPTURN IN ARRESTS IN GUJARAT IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS (CONCEIVABLY EITHER IN ANTICIPATION OF FORMATION OF A CONGRESS GOVT IN THE NEAR FUTURE, OR IN RETALIATION FOR SOME OPPOSITION DEMONSTRATIONS AT THE END OF JUNE) AND BOTH AN INCREASE IN ARRESTS AND A TIGHTENING OF CONTROLS ON POLITICAL MEETINGS IN BIHAR (AS A RESULT OF J.P. NARAYAN'S RETURN TO PATNA AT THE END OF JULY). THE STEADY SERIES OF DAILY ARRESTS OF AKALI DAL SIKHS IN THE PUNJAB ALSO CONTINUES, BUT THE GOVT CAREFULLY RELEASES MANY OF ITS ARRESTS WITHIN A DAY, THUS KEEPING THE LEVEL OF "REPRESSION" AT AN APPARENTLY TOLERABLE POINT WITHIN THE STATE. THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE BEEN A SIGNIFICANT UPTURN IN SECURITY MEASURES IN MOST OTHER STATES.

3. THERE HAS BEEN A COUNTRY-WIDE INCREASE IN LABOR UNREST AND TENSION (NEW DELHI A-218, AUGUST 6, 1976) AND A GROWING SENSE OF UNEASE AND DISILLUSIONMENT AMONG BUSINESSMEN ABOUT THE EMERGENCY CAUSED, WE THINK, BY THE CONTINUING LAG IN CONSUMER DEMAND, THE INCREASING DEMANDS MADE BY POLITICIANS ON BUSINESSMEN FOR CONTRIBUTIONS, AND THE SENSE OF PERSONAL INSECURITY PRODUCED BY SUDDEN RAIDS, ARRESTS AND INQUISITIONS OF BUSINESSMEN BY GOVT AUTHORITIES, EVEN OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN OBSEQUIOUSLY DUTIFUL AND FAITHFUL CONTRIBUTORS AND POLITICAL SERVANTS (SUCH AS PRESIDENT OF FEDERATION OF INDIAN EXPORT ORGANIZATIONS, RANAUQ SINGH). BUT OUR FEELING, AND THAT OF THE THREE CONGENS, IS THAT THE LABOR PROBLEM IS STILL WELL WITHIN THE GOVT'S CONTROL AND THAT, WHILE THE BLOOM IS OFF THE EMERGENCY ROSE FOR INCREASING NUMBERS OF PRIVATE BUSINESSMEN, NEITHER IS THEIR DISAFFECTION A SOURCE OF GREAT

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POLITICAL CONCERN FOR THE PM.

4. THERE HAVE BEEN A SPATE OF RUMORS OF SOME DISAFFECTION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT FAKRUDDIN ALI AHMED. THE STORIES VARY BUT HAVE AS THEIR CENTRAL CORE THAT FAKRUDDIN IS CONCERNED THAT THE PM AND HER SON ARE PUSHING TOO HARD ON THE POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM OF INDIA. (A) ONE VERSION IS THAT THE PM ASKED FAKRUDDIN

TO ARRANGE FOR VICE-PRESIDENT JATTI TO RESIGN, SINCE HE HAD BEEN TOO QUIET IN PRAISE OF THE EMERGENCY AND HAD REFUSED TO ENDORSE THE GOVT'S FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS. IN HIS PLACE, THE PM WANTED TO PLACE FORMER DEFMIN SWARAN SINGH. FAKRUDDIN ALLEGEDLY EXPRESSED HIS STRONG RELUCTANCE TO GO ALONG WITH SUCH A SCENAIRO. (B) ANOTHER VERSION IS THAT THE PM TOLD THE PRESIDENT SHE WISHED HER ENTIRE CABINET TO RESIGN SO THAT SHE COULD REPLACE MANY OF THE OLDER MINISTERS WITH YOUNGER, MORE VIGOROUS, AND FRESHER-MINDED INDIVIDUALS. FAKRUDDIN ALLEGEDLY EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERN OVER ANY PLAN FOR THE WHOLESALE DISPOSAL OF SENIOR CONGRESS COLLEAGUES ON THE GROUNDS THIS WOULD JEOPARDIZE CONGRESS UNITY AND ILL-SERVE THOSE WHO HAD FOLLOWED THE PM IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY. ANOTHER VARIATION OF THIS VERSION IS THAT THE PM INSISTED ON THE REMOVAL OF MINSTATE FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE NURAL HASSAN AND OF IRRIGATION AND AGRICULTURE, SHAHNAWAZ KHAN, AT LEAST THE LATTER BEING DEFENDED BY FAKRUDDIN AS AN OLD FRIEND AND INFLUENTIAL MUSLIM. (ACTUALLY SHAHNAWAZ'S TROUBLE APPARENTLY DERIVES FROM HIS INVOLVEMENT IN UP POLITICS, THE SINK-HOLE OF ALL INDIAN POLITICAL MANEUVERING AND A MOST SENSITIVE ARENA FOR THE PM.) (C) A THIRD VERSION ATTRIBUTES FAKRUDDIN'S PIQUE TO A REQUEST BY SANJAY THAT HE PROVIDE A STATEMENT FOR THE OPENING ISSUE OF SANJAY'S NEW MAGAZINE, "SURYA", A REQUEST THE PRESIDENT ALLEGEDLY TURNED DOWN AS IN-APPROPRIATE AND UNUSUAL. SANJAY IS SAID TO HAVE RESPONDED WITH UNKIND WORDS ABOUT THE PRESIDENT WHICH WERE REPORTED TO HIM, LED TO HIS COMPLAINING TO MRS. GANDHI, AND ULTIMATELY TO THE PM'S OFFER OF AN APOLOGY ON BEHALF OF HER SON--WHO DECLINED TOMAKE THE APOLOGY HIMSELF. (D) INTERWOVEN WITH ALL THESE VERSIONS IS THE REPORT THAT MRS. GANDHI HAS BEEN ANNOYED BY SOME OF BEGUM ABIDA'S ACTIVITIES AND REMARKS.

5. WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT AT LEAST SOME OF THIS HAS A RING OF TRUTH. FAKRUDDIN INDEED DOES SEEM TO BE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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SOME OF MRS. GANDHI'S ACTIONS AND CERTAINLY WITH THOSE OF HER SON (WE HAVE HEARD MUCH MORE RELIABLY THAT FAKRUDDIN IS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED OVER SOME OF THE GOVT'S FAMILY PLANNING MOVES). IT IS UNCERTAIN EXACTLY HOW FIRM THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE IN MAINTAINING HIS RESISTANCE TO MRS. GANDHI. HIS PREDECESSOR AS PRESIDENT, V.V. GIRI, WAS A FAR STRONGER MAN, BUT WHEN FACED WITH THE RISKS OF ACTUALLY CONFRONTING THE PM, INVARIABLY RECOILED. HIS SON, MP V.S. GIRI, TELLS US THAT THE POLITICAL SUBORDINATION OF THE PRESIDENT TO THE PM IN THE INDIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM IS IRREVOCABLE, AND THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE THOUGHT THAT PRESIDENT AHMED WOULD TAKE PUBLIC ISSUE WITH MRS. GANDHI, EVEN THOUGH HE MIGHT PRIVATELY OFFER HER STRONG ADVICE.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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IO-13 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 AID-05 /088 W

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R 061257Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7584

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMEMBASSY DACCA

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6. NEVERTHELESS, SAMACHAR ON AUGUST 4 REPORTED THAT THE SWARAN SINGH CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM COMMITTEE HAD RECOMMENDED THAT CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION 77(3) WHICH PROVIDES FOR ALLOCATION OF PORTFOLIOS AMONG CABINET MINISTERS BY PRESIDENTIAL (OR GUBERNATORIAL) ORDER BE ALTERED TO ALLOW THE PRIME MINISTER (AND THE STATE CHIEF MINISTERS) TO MAKE SUCH ALLOCATIONS HERSELF, WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE PRESIDENT. THIS NEW RECOMMENDATION (NOT PREVIOUSLY REPORTED AS HAVING BEEN UNDER CONSIDERATION) WOULD REDUCE WHAT LITTLE INFLUENCE THE PRESIDENT HAS HAD ON CABINET CHANGES AND MAY WELL RELATE TO MRS. GANDHI'S DECISION NOT TO TAKE ANY FURTHER CHANCES WITH FAKRUDDIN'S OPPOSITION IN THE FUTURE.

7. FOR WHATEVER REASONS, THE WIDELY EXPECTED CABINET SHIFTS (WHICH WE LEARN WERE TO HAVE BEEN EFFECTED ABOUT JULY 15) HAVE ONCE AGAIN BEEN PUT OFF BY THE PM. LOCAL OBSERVERS DIFFER OVER WHETHER SHE ONCE AGAIN WAS SIMPLY TOYING WITH HER CABINET MEMBERS, AROUSING IN EACH OF THEM A SENSE OF INSECURITY AND UNCERTAINTY, OR DECIDED TO DELAY CHANGES FOR OTHER POLITICAL REASONS INCLUDING PROBLEMS WITH THE PRESIDENT.

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THE HOSPITALIZATION FOR TWO WEEKS IN LATE JULY AND EARLY AUGUST OF MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZER (AND CONGRESS PARTY TREASURER AND CHIEF FUNDS COLLECTOR) P.C. SETHI MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN A FACTOR. SETHI'S PROBLEM WAS APPARENTLY PSYCHIATRIC AND HAD BEEN SHOWN IN INCREASINGLY UNSTABLE AND VIOLENT BEHAVIOR IN PUBLIC OVER A PERIOD OF WEEKS BEFORE HE WENT FOR A "REST."

8. AGAIN, THERE IS THE MOUNTING WHISPERING ABOUT VINOBA BHAVE'S PLANS TO LAUNCH A FAST-TO-DEATH ON SEPT 11 FOR "ANTI-COW SLAUGHTER" LEGISLATION, AND THE HOPE OF THE OPPOSITION THAT HE WILL MESH THIS WITH AGITATION AGAINST THE EMERGENCY AS WELL (NEW DELHI A-225, AUGUST 6, 1976). BUT ALTHOUGH, ON THE EVE OF PARLIAMENT'S RECONVENING AUGUST 10, ALL THESE TOPICS HAVE PRODUCED THE MOST ACTIVE STIRRING AND CONVERSATION AMONG CONGRESS (AND OPPOSITION) CIRCLES THAT WE HAVE HEARD SINCE THE EMERGENCY BEGAN, WE ARE DIS-INCLINED TO BELIEVE EITHER THAT THEY BETOKEN ANY SIGNIFICANT STRENGTHENING OF EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE EMERGENCY, OR THAT HER POSITION HAS SIGNIFICANTLY BEEN WEAKENED. WHAT THEY DO INDICATE, HOWEVER, IS THAT AS THE EMERGENCY BECOMES ROUTINIZED, WHAT ENTHUSIASM THERE WAS FOR IT HAS PROGRESSIVELY FADED AND THE CYNICISM AND APATHY WHICH WE HAD EARLY NOTED AS GROWING HAS BECOME MORE MARKED. A JOKE CURRENTLY CIRCULATING AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN DELHI PERHAPS SYMBOLIZES THIS: FLYING OVER INDIA BY PLANE, MRS. GANDHI TELLS SANJAY, "IF I THREW A HUNDRED ONE RUPEE NOTES OUT THE WINDOW, HOW HAPPY WOULD BE THE VILLAGERS WHO FOUND THEM." SANJAY REPLIES, "IF I THREW A THOUSAND ONE RUPEE NOTES OUT THE WINDOW, THEY WOULD BE EVEN HAPPIER." THE PILOT REMARKS TO HIMSELF, "IF YOU THREW YOURSELVES OUT THE WINDOW, THEY WOULD BE HAPPIEST OF ALL."

9. IN CONSIDERING THE CURRENT SITUATION, WE ARE STRUCK BY THE REMARKABLY APT WORDS OF THE THIRD CENTURY ROMAN HISTORIAN, DIO CASSIUS: "AFTER AUGUSTUS' TIME MOST THINGS THAT HAPPENED BEGAN TO BE SECRET AND CONCEALED, AND EVEN THOUGH SOME THINGS HAPPEN BY CHANCE TO BE MADE PUBLIC, THEY ARE DISTRUSTED JUST BECAUSE THEY CAN NOT BE VERIFIED. FOR IT IS SUSPECTED THAT EVERYTHING IS SAID AND DONE WITH REFERENCE TO THE WISHES OF THE MEN IN POWER AND THE TIME AND OF THEIR ASSOCIATES. CONFIDENTIAL

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AS A RESULT, MUCH THAT OCCURS IS NOISED ABROAD AND MUCH THAT HAPPENS BEYOND A DOUBT IS UNKNOWN, AND IN THE CASE OF NEARLY EVERY EVENT A VERSION GAINS CURRENCY THAT IS

DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY IT REALLY HAPPENED."

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## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLITICAL STABILITY, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, EMERGENCY PLANNING, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 06 AUG 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** saccheem  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Reference:** 76 NEW DELHI 9553, 76 NEW DELHI 7459, 76 NEW DELHI 10526, 76 NEW DELHI 11071  
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**Review Authority:** saccheem  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 07 JUN 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <07 JUN 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <04 OCT 2004 by saccheem>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** POLITICAL RUMORS, POLITICAL APATHY, POLITICAL STABILITY  
**TAGS:** PINT, IN, (GANDHI, INDIRA)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006